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Up Down

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UP DOWN

Des Moines' new arcade bar

WRITTEN BY LAUREN GRANT DESIGN BY JOE SUMMERS

The dinging and flashes of old-time arcade games can now be experienced while drinking a cold beer instead of a grape soda. “Barcade” is a new and upcoming trend in big cities around the nation. A fusion of unique American craft beers and all-time favorite arcade games creates a wild and fun atmosphere for patrons of all ages.

The first actual Barcade® opened in 2004 in Brooklyn. Six years later two additional locations opened in Jersey City and Philadelphia. Since then, arcade bars have begun to pop up around the nation with similar concepts. Recently, the Des Moines bar scene has joined the trend with the opening of Up-Down in the East Village.

Sam Summers, Josh Ivey and Rafe Mateer, owners of Wooly’s music venue, recently opened the arcade bar in October. Up-Down offers more than 20 craft beers on tap and serves cocktails that correlate with many of the 40 classic arcade games at the bar. Princess Peach Punch, Super Mario-garita and Contreau Code are just a few of the cocktails. Yet the games are truly the heart of Up-Down; for just 25 cents you can play any game ranging from Pac-Man to skee ball to giant Jenga.



Co-owners Josh Ivey (left) and Sam Summers (right) hunt down zombies while “working” on a busy Friday night.

Walking into the bar, you immediately feel like you’ve walked into a basement from the 1980s. The walls are papered with classic movie posters, and patterned couches sit in front of old gaming consoles. Instead of the usual sports channels expected, classic movies such as *American Gladiators* are constantly playing on the televisions.

The three friends envisioned Up-Down to be an experience for people of all ages. Incorporating aspects of their childhood to create a “friend’s mom’s basement - with alcohol” kind of atmosphere. They wanted to make people feel comfortable while going out. “I feel like we will be the bar for people that don’t like to go out,” said co-owner Summers. As for the current bar scene, he says, “The bigger picture is that we want to continue to create ideas and concepts that will keep people interested in Des Moines.” The East Village is a “perfect fit” for Up-Down, “There are a lot of great established businesses in the East Village and they all lend to the sort of vibe we trying to embrace at Up-Down,” said Summers.

Up-Down has a unique target audience, mostly consisting of adults who are in their late twenties and thirties. “Being 30, I know how difficult it is to leave that couch. I think we have created something that makes everyone feel comfortable going out.”

Libby Barclay, a recent Iowa State graduate, considers herself an amateur restaurant and bar critic. She has worked in many upscale restaurants in the Ames area including Café Shí as well as Aunt Maude’s. Beyond that, she travels often and dines in many large cities. Her opinion of Up-Down arcade bar is a positive one. “It is such a great place for young professionals to gather and have a night out. It is a place I can see myself bringing my parents, but I can also see college students really enjoying this.”

Barclay isn’t the only one who really enjoys this type of atmosphere. Sarah Grant, owner of Sticks Inc. who has a gallery located in the East Village, is ecstatic about the Up-Down. “It is a great place for myself and my employees to go after work for a few drinks and to enjoy each other’s company. I am also looking forward to taking my daughters there when they come to visit.”

The type of atmosphere that Up-Down offers its customers is different than any other bar in the area. With a pocket full of quarters you can play games that take you back to your childhood, or even your parents’. Enjoy a craft beer or some other unique drink as you experience the nostalgia of the Up-Down bar arcade.

